

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 004403

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: POLL SHOWS JORDANIANS WANT PARLIAMENT AND SEEK
GREATER REFORM, BUT LACK CONFIDENCE IN PARLIAMENTARIANS'
ABILITY TO DELIVER

Classified By: PolCouns Doug Silliman, per 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (U) Summary: The University of Jordan,s Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) released an opinion poll 8 July which suggests Jordanians want an active Parliament but doubt that their newly elected Lower House will be an effective law-making body. It also reveals that domestic concerns, not foreign policy, are the priority of most Jordanians, with unemployment, poverty, and corruption topping the list. The poll, based on interviews with 1,400 people across the country, was conducted 21-29 June. This poll seems at odds with other recent polling that suggests Palestinian-related issues take precedence over all but the most personal bread-and-butter issues. End Summary.

Legislative Effectiveness

2. (U) Buttreassing the notion that Jordanians want to see an effective Parliament, slightly more than half of the respondents rejected the idea that h-thing will change with or without a Lower House of Parliament.8 At the same time, about the same number believed that new MPs would be concerned with their personal interests and family businesses; only one-quarter said that they would dedicate themselves to the good of the community.

Parliamentary Elections & Policy Priorities

3. (U) Asked about the transparency and fairness of the recent Parliamentary elections, only 1 in 5 respondents judged them unfair. As for allegations of vote-buying, nearly three-quarters claimed to have heard of the &vote sales8 phenomenon, with approximately 35 percent saying it had been prevalent to a large or very large degree in their constituencies.

4. (U) The poll confirmed previous studies concluding that the Jordanian masses put greater importance on local issues over foreign-policy questions. Concern for domestic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and corruption rank well above regional issues of Palestine and Iraq.

Democratization

5. (U) The poll found Jordanians disillusioned with the country,s democratization, rating Jordan just above the half-way mark on a ten-point scale. Jordanians ranked their country third in the region in terms of degree of democratization - behind Lebanon and Israel, but ahead of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the Palestinian Authority, and Iraq. Of interest is the rating received by the United States, which though given a 7.44 out of 10 this year, has fallen steadily from a 2001 high of 8.33. CSS analysts suggested that American policies regarding the Intifada and the war in Iraq have deepened widespread suspicions of U.S. democracy and may explain this pattern of decline.

6. (U) More than four-fifths said they fear they would be punished in one way or another for criticizing the government, up a dramatic 13 points from 1999. Fear of governmental repercussions prevents the majority of Jordanians from vocally criticizing policy, assert the Centre,s pollsters.

Justice, the Economy & Development

7. (U) The public seemed dissatisfied with the extent to which authorities respect the principles of justice and equality. The percentage of those who believed Jordan has very high respect for the law has steadily declined to 9.6 percent from 1999,s 33.3 percent. CSS also notes an increase in the percentage of those responding unfavorably.

8. (U) Almost half of the interviewees reported that their economic situation has worsened over the past year, while only 10 percent said they were better off. These results

reflect a general perception that the fruits of economic reforms do not benefit people across the board and are not distributed evenly.

9. (U) Nearly 90 percent of respondents said they wanted to live under a democracy, with three-quarters of them defining this in terms of respect for civil liberties and political rights, socio-economic development, and equality and justice.

Policy Implications

10. (U) A 10 July editorial in the Jordan Times suggested that the poll highlights the fact that Jordanians understand the importance of voting in procedural terms but continue to lack a firm comprehension of democracy's potential. The piece concluded that the new Parliament should heed the messages of the poll and focus its attention on bread-and-butter constituent matters to win popular support.

Comment

11. (C) Palace sources tell us that, in their own private polling, bread-and-butter issues rank first in popular concern. However, unlike this CSS poll, the Palace poll indicates most Jordanians rank the Palestinian question higher than issues such as health care, infrastructure improvements, and education. Jordanians, like other Arabs, consider the issue not as a foreign-policy concern but as an existential, personal issue. The results of a Zogby International poll from October 2002 mirror this sentiment. Respondents placed Palestine and the rights of Palestinians with their personal economic situation as the next-ranking concerns, far ahead of other issues, such as their national economies and their country's relationship with other Arab or non-Arab countries.

12. (C) The results of the CSS poll show some success in the government's policies of turning the focus from regional politics to pocketbook issues and highlights that further improvement is needed to reap the economic benefits on the micro-level. If the CSS poll is right, many Jordanians may evaluate MPs on economic issues -- something on which most Members have a shaky grasp (at best).

HALE